

Contextual Meaning of Work and its Sociological Significance among the Yoruba People in Nigeria

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Abstract : Work is a term that appears to be very common in usage and occurrence the world over. The meanings attached to it and what it implies equally appears to be that common and somewhat similar in description by individuals and groups as derivatives of their contexts. Work is generally seen as the exertion of efforts and the application of knowledge and skills to achieve different purposes comprising of earning a living, making money, prestige, achievement, recognition, companionship and other satisfactions. The paper examined the general meanings of work from the perspectives of various religions. It situated these meanings by drawing on the sociological significance of work among the Yoruba. It established work as social control for a reorientation in peoples approach to work. The Yoruba people of the Western Nigeria share, to a great extent, in common conceptualization and application of work as they believe and understand that their individual and community existence and living are contingent on work participation. The contextual meaning and sociological significance of work as investigated in this paper show that the Yorubas concept of work is daily applied variously in both their material and non-material cultural undertakings to influence individual and group for effective participation in productive ventures for overall social well-being. The Yoruba use all forms of training method which could be adopted by adult educators as pathways to increase individual's work participation and to improve productivity in work organizations. The paper found out that in the Yoruba socio cultural milieu, the meanings, conceptions and the importance attached to work are used as method of inculcating in members of society the spirit of commitment and hard-work and the advantages thereof. Yoruba contexts of work are geared towards enhancement of commitment, diligence and improved productivity on-the-job behaviour. The paper, therefore, submits that using the Yoruba's conceptions of work could enhance commitment on the parts of all those engaged in production of goods and services. The paper also suggests that the Yoruba principle and perception and application of work could be used as one of the training techniques in industrial education, which is a major aspect of adult education programmes for inculcating ethics in the workplace. Thus, effort should be made to embrace the Yoruba conception and tenet of work by all stakeholders such as the workers, group (Union), managers and the society at large. Such principles and tenet of work should be included in industrial education curriculum.

Keywords : work, contextual meaning, sociological significance, Yoruba-people, social milieu, productivity

Conference Title : ICMBSS 2015 : International Conference on Management, Business and Social Sciences

Conference Location : London, United Kingdom

Conference Dates : January 19-20, 2015